

# PestGazette

## Travel Tips for Your Spring Trips

### *Four Ways to Help You Reduce Your Costs at the Pump!*

**1. Think Shade:** Park your car in the shade wherever possible. The sun will steal fuel from your gas tank through evaporating emissions, especially in older cars (five or more years). Be sure you also have a tight-fitting gas cap!

**2. Drive More Efficiently:** Rapidly accelerating and braking wastes gas and can lower your miles per gallon by 33 percent at highway speeds and by five percent around town. Speeding decreases gas mileage; each 5 mph over 60 mph is likely costing an additional \$0.20 per gallon for gas! Use cruise control to maintain a steady speed.

**3. Combine Trips:** Several short trips taken from a cold start can use twice as much fuel as longer multipurpose trips covering the

same distance when the engine is warm. With a little planning, you can avoid retracing your route and reduce the distance you travel as well.

**4. Choose a Fuel-Efficient Vehicle:** The most efficient vehicles get about 35 miles per gallon; “gas guzzlers” get less than 20. The difference between a car that gets 20 mpg and one that gets 30 mpg amounts to \$750 per year, for motorists averaging 15,000 miles of driving annually. *That’s nearly \$4,000 of gas savings over five years!*

For more gas mileage tips, as well as information on alternative fuel vehicles, visit [www.fueleconomy.gov](http://www.fueleconomy.gov).

## Beware of Termites

**M**ore than 365,000 homes in the U.S. are involved in a fire each year. More than 600,000 U.S. homes suffer termite damage totaling over \$5 billion annually. This is more than the damage caused by all fires, most storms and earthquakes combined. More than 2 million homes require termite treatment each year. Homeowners insurance can help recover losses from fires, floods and earthquakes, but it is almost impossible to get insurance against termites. Finding out your home has termites can scare most homeowners. You typically can’t see them, you can’t hear them and frequently only a trained inspector can find signs of infestation.

Treatment by the homeowner for the control of termites is virtually impossible. Specialized equipment is used and the experts have the necessary knowledge for effective control. A trained termite control specialist can provide protection from termite infestation. Termites are found in almost every state as well as Mexico and parts of Canada. They eat wood and may also destroy paper products such as books, cardboard boxes, furniture, and various other items. Even buildings with steel framing and masonry walls are targets because of the wooden doors, window frames, wooden support beams, cabinets, or shelving. To learn more about how we can develop a termite management plan best suited to your situation, call a trained professional today.



# Swarming Can Spread Termites Quickly

**A**fter termite infestations reach a certain level, usually more than 10,000 for northern temperate subterranean termites, winged reproductive male and female “swarmers” are produced and leave the colony in a “swarm.” This is usually triggered by a rain or springtime (warming temperatures and lengthening days), and occurs usually around dusk or dawn. Large colonies may release swarmers in several pulse-like groups over two or more days when conditions are right. Swarmers fly upward at first and may be attracted to light. After landing, they break off their wings. They mate for a short time before searching out a suitable piece of wood in which to begin a nest. Their first brood will take over the colony maintenance and food gathering, and the queen reverts to producing only eggs. The pair is mated for life. The queen can produce roughly 1,000 eggs per day by her fourth year of life. If either the king or queen dies, other members of the colony can change into reproductives and replace the lost member of that pair.



Termite colony



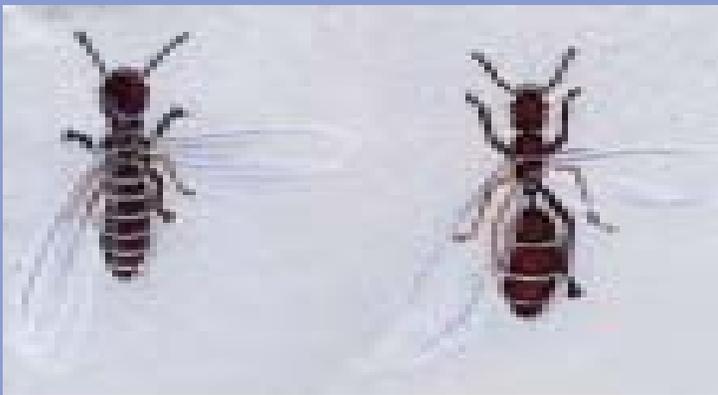
Termite 'swarmer'

## How can you tell if those “fluttering” flying things are termites?

Subterranean termites mainly live underground or in protected areas such as galleries in wood. There is always at least one queen, and many more “secondary reproductives” are usually present. Most people never see a queen, but may see swarmers or workers. The total number of individuals in a colony of subterranean termites can total more than a million. Imagine a million insects attacking your house! Workers are small white insects. They are blind and very sensitive to heat, cold and dry air. This sensitivity is why they build shelter tubes or “mud tubes.” In fact, they need to maintain an atmosphere of nearly 100 percent humidity. Sometimes finding shelter tubes, a little smaller diameter than a pencil, is the first sign of a termite infestation. Workers are just that ... the workers of the colony. They find new food sources (vegetation or wood containing cellulose). Upon finding a food source, the termites put down a chemical signal or pheromone to lead the other workers to the feeding site. Termites do not “attack” your house or building. They forage and find food sources, commonly in moist areas.

When they discover your house or other buildings, they become a real pest and that is when the professional pest management company comes in. In most areas of the country, depending on the species, healthy subterranean termite colonies will “swarm” or send out winged reproductive termites to start new colonies in the spring. The swarmers are darker in color, some species almost black, and have four wings. For more information on how to tell termites from ants, see the box on the left.

## How to tell termites from ants:



### Termites:

- Termites swarm at very limited times of the year.
- The body of the termite swarmer is about 3/8" long.
- They have four wings of equal size.
- Termites have a straight waist as well as straight antennae.
- You will notice they are clumsy fliers.

### Ants:

- Ants swarm throughout the year depending on species.
- The body of an ant will vary in size depending on the species.
- They have four wings; two smaller and two larger and pinched waists.
- Ants have elbowed antennae and are good fliers.



Subterranean termite soldier



Subterranean termite workers

### Detecting and Controlling Termites is a Job for the Professional

A thorough inspection by a termite control specialist is the first and most important step in protecting your property. “Experienced” eyes can locate the specific areas in your structure where a termite attack is likely to occur. Some inspectors may use special tools such as moisture meters, sound amplifiers or specially trained dogs to locate termite.

If a termite infestation is found, the specialist can then design a treatment plan specific for your property that will control any current infestation and establish either a liquid treated zone, a baited zone or in some cases, both around the structure to take care of future termite infestations. Physical barriers, such as a fine stainless steel mesh, a chemically impregnated plastic film, or specific-sized basaltic sand layer have been shown to be effective at preventing subterranean termite infestations as well. ■

## Termite Signs

Possible signs of a termite infestation may include:

- Pencil-sized diameter, or larger, mud tubes running across bare concrete or masonry between the soil and any wooden part of your building, inside or outside.
- Thin, small, papery wings, all the same size and shape, 3/8" to 1/2" long, on your windowsill, counter top or floor (especially if it is late spring and there has been a recent rain).
- Thin “bubbled” or distorted areas of paint on wooden surfaces, which feel cool to the touch.
- Any wooden building parts (especially if they are support structures) begin to “sag” unexpectedly.



Termite ‘tubes’



Termite-damaged wood

## Other Moisture-Related Spring Pests



*Springtails are commonly found in moist or damp places.*



*Plaster beetles are small reddish or black beetles found flying in homes during spring and summer.*

**A**pril showers may bring May flowers, but those showers may also add to the amount of moisture in and around your home. Along with this moisture, you may begin to see certain pests you had not noticed before, including springtails, booklice and plaster beetles.

**Springtails** are very small (rarely more than 1/5" long), pale brown to cream-colored insects that seem to hop when disturbed. Springtails are commonly found in moist or damp places, usually in contact with soil. Because of the ease with which moisture can escape their bodies, springtails are extremely sensitive to drying out, and many species inhabit soil.

Springtails invade structures in search of moisture when their usual habitat becomes dry. Usual outdoor habitats include mulch, leaf litter or other decaying organic matter, firewood, logs, and landscape timbers. They are attracted to light and are so small that they can enter houses through cracks and crevices around doors, utility pipes, window screens, etc. They can also be brought indoors in the soil of potted plants. Indoors, they are most often found in high-moisture areas such as bathrooms, kitchens, crawlspaces, and basements. Moldy furniture is also able to support large infestations.

Homeowners who find these tiny insects in and around houseplants are often concerned that they are likely to harm their plants however, this is not the case. Occasionally, large numbers of springtails congregate on the surface of the soil in masses that can be as large as a softball. Large masses can also appear on sidewalks, patios, concrete porches, or old snow banks, where they feed on algae and fungal spores.

**Booklice** are commonly associated with books or paper. Despite being called 'lice,' booklice are not harmful to people or pets. They are soft-bodied insects, less than 3/16" long. They may have four wings or be wingless. They are generally gray or

brown in color. There are a few species of wingless booklice that are commonly seen in buildings.

Booklice most often feed on molds, fungi, grains, insect fragments, and other starchy material, including glue from bookbindings. In homes, they can be found in damp, warm, undisturbed places where mold and fungi are growing. They are more likely to be a problem during spring or summer. Though they rarely do any damage inside buildings, their presence can become a nuisance, especially when occurring in large numbers. The most effective control method is to reduce moisture. Most booklice do not survive when humidity falls below 50 percent. A dehumidifier or fan is effective in reducing moisture.

Sometimes airing out a room to keep the air moving may be sufficient. Also repair any moisture problems and store boxes, bags, books, and papers off the floor to minimize exposure to dampness.

**Plaster beetles** are small reddish or black beetles found flying in homes during spring and summer. Newly-constructed homes, damp areas in basements and bathrooms, and homes in rural areas are commonly affected. Plaster beetles can range in size from 1/10" to 1/6" in length and are often seen weakly flying around the home. They remind some people of the small beetles found in flour or cereal products. Plaster beetles are typically concentrated in areas of high humidity.

**Fungus beetles** feed on mold or mildews and are attracted to anything that is musty smelling. Moisture levels in new buildings will often attract these insects. They are harmless, but small enough to get through most screening, vents and other openings. Anything that will lower humidity and dry things out will help. Once winter cold weather sets in again and kills outside beetles, and the furnace starts running, the insects will disappear. Running dehumidifiers or checking vents for proper screening will help reduce migration. ■